

EXHIBIT

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THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE MIDDLE DISTRICT OF NORTH CAROLINA

Civil Action No. 1:14-CV-00954-LCB-JLW

STUDENTS FOR FAIR ADMISSIONS,)
INC.,)
)
Plaintiff,)
)
v.)
)
UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA,)
et al.,)
)
Defendants,)
)
and)
)
LUIS ACOSTA; ANDREW BRENNAN,)
CHRISTOPHER JACKSON on behalf of)
C.J.; RAMONIA JONES on behalf of R.J.;)
JULIA NIEVES on behalf of I.N.; ANGIE &)
KEVIN MILLS on behalf of Q.M.; LAURA)
ORNELAS; CECILIA POLANCO;)
TAMIKA WILLIAMS on behalf of A.J.;)
and STAR WINGATEBEY)
)
Defendant-Intervenors.)
)

DECLARATION OF MARIA GOMEZ FLORES

Maria Gomez Flores, pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1746, declares the following:

1. My name is Maria Gomez Flores, I am over 18 years of age, and I am fully competent to make this declaration.

2. I am a full-time undergraduate student at UNC-Chapel Hill. I am in my 4th year and am pursuing a major in Political Science and a minor in History and Latina/o Studies.

3. I am Latina. I am a first generation college student and come from a working class family.

4. I chose UNC-Chapel Hill because I knew that it was a university with a good name and reputation. I knew that this university had the ability to provide me with resources to fully reach my career goals. I also decided on this school because I was under the impression that it was diverse. Unfortunately, that is not the case. It is diverse relative to other universities like Duke or NC State, but, for someone that comes from Siler City, a city with over 50% are people of color, I was really disappointed to find out that UNC-Chapel Hill is not as diverse as I would have hoped or expected.

5. Although UNC-Chapel Hill lacks diversity, I still had some good experiences with the resources it provides. I finally felt at home when I joined Latinx based organizations on campus, like the Carolina Hispanic Association, Carolina Latina/o Collaborative, and NC Sli. These organizations are very important to my happiness at UNC. I liked how they would have events that cater to the culture I grew up in, from food to celebrations. These organizations were also very important to finding my friends on campus. By no means are the Latinx organizations exclusive, therefore, I got to experience sharing my culture with other people with different backgrounds. In return, I also enjoyed engaging in other cultures and going to events held by other organizations.

In my opinion, I feel like the communities of color on UNC-Chapel Hill are very tight knit. This might be because we are such a small group on campus, but we try to make the best out of what we have.

6. Due to the many diverse groups on campus, in terms that there are many people with different backgrounds, I have learned more about them and being exposed to them, have broken down some stereotypes that I had. I believe that if the university lacked significantly more, in terms of diversity, I would have been closed- minded. However, this just shows that with more diversity the student population will become more knowledgeable and culturally competent.

7. Due to lack of sufficient diversity at UNC, I have had negative experiences that go all the way back to freshman year. In my English 105 class there was a class discussion about Silent Sam. Although I was not the only minority in that class, there were no black students. I was also the only one that was willing to go against the white majority opinion. I felt like I had to speak up for a community I did not belong to. This debate encompasses blackness at UNC-Chapel Hill, but I am not black. Although I do not regret defending the black community, it made me feel the divide between the school and myself. I felt “othered”. It made me realize that I will never fully fit into this school. Another experience was when I was taking my Micro 251 course. The professor used a racist analogy. In order to help us understand the types of organism that invaded a cell, she used Mexico and Canada as a way to represent it. She described the good organisms as Canadian immigrants; they come into the US and then just leave. However, the bad

organism invades the cell and hurts it without ever leaving the cell. She compared this organism to Mexican immigrants. I was very appalled with this professor to the point that it made me just dislike hearing her voice. It made me stop coming to class, and obviously, it hurt my grade. I have also been in classrooms where I was the only student of color and the environment was not good for me. I felt pressured to speak up for my community, as if I was the sole spokesperson. Another interesting thing is that when I would do group projects where I was the only person of color, I felt excluded. I felt like the other students believed that I was not capable of intellectual discussion. Therefore they would not ask for my input, and when I did give it, they would be very dismissive with me. When there are too few students of color in a classroom setting, it is very noticeable. Students of color feel excluded and “othered”. This puts stress on us and it affects us mentally. This can lead to anxiety, depression, and other mental health conditions, which can result in us performing worse. I could go on and on, but these are some of the few situations that I have experienced.

8. I feel very underrepresented at UNC-Chapel Hill at all times. I am very aware that UNC lacks diversity. My major is dominated not only by whites, but specifically white males. There is a weird power dynamic when it comes to class discussion. White people do not seem to understand that they can learn from students of color. When students of color start to participate, the white students become disengaged. It is a horrible feeling, because no one wants to feel less than they are. It is not only students, but professors as well, that lack in diversity. In the political science department,

there has never been a tenured professor that is non-white. A couple of political science professors that were black applied for tenure, but I have not been fully updated on it yet. I do know that one of them was my professor. Unfortunately, she did not get approved, so she decided to leave the university.

9. I also felt tokenized at times when the class discussion would lead to race. I was asked to speak up for many communities of color. I have not felt tokenized in extracurriculars, because I refuse to engage in organizations that disregard students of color. Unfortunately, it has hindered my right to fully engage in my university. Although I did decide to not be a part of a white-dominated organization, I would have liked to have been a part, due to the opportunities it could have provided. I decided however that I would rather not put myself in a potentially damaging or hostile environment.

10. The UNC administration does not handle racial issues in an effective way. The university seems to prioritize the white students and the universities' self-interest. During a Silent Sam rally, the campus police decided to protect KKK supporters instead of their black *students*. These KKK supporters were outsiders—not even part of campus, but they were still protected. The university would rather protect a terrorist group than their own students that pay tuition, just because of the color of their skin. Also, the name change of one of the campus buildings was handled very sloppily. Saunders Hall needed a name change because the person it was named after was a KKK leader. The university only changed the name because of student pressure. In order to protect its self-interest,

the university changed the name but refused to allow any other building to get a name change during the next approximately 16 years.

I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct. Executed
this 1st day of June, 2017.



Maria Gomez Flores